



**STATEMENT OF PROCEEDINGS FOR THE  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR  
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION  
500 WEST TEMPLE STREET, ROOM 374A  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012  
<http://lachildrenscommission.org>**

**Monday, January 27, 2014**

**10:00 AM**

**Present:** Chair Geneva Berger, Vice Chair Susan F. Friedman, Commissioner Carol O. Biondi, Commissioner Patricia Curry, Commissioner Ann E. Franzen, Commissioner Sydney Kamlager, Commissioner Helen Kleinberg, Commissioner Adelina Sorkin LCSW/ACSW and Commissioner Martha Trevino-Powell

**Excused:** Vice Chair Steven M. Olivas Esq., Commissioner Candace Cooper, Commissioner Dr. Sunny Kang, Commissioner Adrienne Konigar-Macklin and Commissioner Becky A. Shevlin

**Call to Order.** (14-0418)

**The meeting was called to order at 10:15 a.m.**

**I. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

1. Introductions of January 27, 2014 Meeting attendees. (14-0415)

**Self-introductions were made.**

2. Approval of the January 27, 2014 Meeting Agenda. (14-0419)

**On motion of Commissioner Adelina Sorkin LCSW/ACSW, seconded by Commissioner Ann E. Franzen, (Vice Chair Olivas and Commissioners Cooper, Kang, Konigar Macklin and Shevlin being absent), this item was approved.**

3. Approval of the minutes from the Meeting of January 13, 2014. (14-0420)

**By common consent, there being no objection this item was continued to the next meeting.**

**Attachments:** [SUPPORTING DOCUMENT](#)

## **II. REPORTS**

4. Chair's report for January 27, 2014 by Genevra Berger, Chair. (14-0421)

**Chair Berger reported the following:**

- **In observance of Presidents' Day on February 17, 2014, a Commission meeting will not be held. Therefore, only one meeting is scheduled for the month of February, on February 3, 2014. Please note that this meeting will be held at the Altadena Senior Center in Pasadena. The meeting will be dedicated to the planning of the Commission's Agendas for 2014.**
- **Martha Arana, Commission staff will no longer provide staff support for the Commission, she is moving to a different Division within the Executive Office of the Board of Supervisors. The Commission is greatly appreciative of the dedication and support Ms. Arana has provided over the years, she will be greatly missed.**

**By common consent and there being no objection, this item was received and filed.**

5. DCFS Director's report for January 27, 2014 by Philip Browning, Director, DCFS. (14-0422)

**Director Browning reported the following:**

- **To date, there have been three Academy classes that have undergone the new Children's Social Worker (CSW) Academy Training. The first class that completed the CSW Academy will be taking on a full caseload within the month of January. The goal is to have 450 new CSW's by the end of October 2014. DCFS and law enforcement staff have contributed to the simulation component of the training. The target is to have lower caseloads closer to 20 per CSW in the Continuing Services Area. Planning is underway to incorporate supervisory training for current staff in the training sessions.**
- **The DCFS New Policy Manual (Manual) is scheduled to go live on a new web based platform within the month of January. The number of policies contained in the have been reduced by approximately 25 percent.**

- The Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection (BRC) recently released its interim report in December of 2013. On January 23, 2014, DCFS provided a preliminary response to the BRC's interim report on questions posed by Supervisor Mark Ridley Thomas. A copy of the response will be provided to the Commission.
- Through a collaborative effort between DCFS, the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), and the Juvenile Court, a DPSS unit will be established in the court to assist families with health care enrollment as part of the health care reform. Families with coverage may now be eligible to receive mental health and substance abuse counseling and treatment under the Affordable Care Act.
- DCFS requested a time extension from the State for the processing of the Family Preservation contracts due to the high number of appeals received in response to the scoring results of the Family Preservation Request for Proposals (RFP).

In response to questions posed by the Commission, Director Browning responded with the following:

- A case load equity model is being used when determining where to place new CSWs. Targeted recruitment is being done for positions in the Antelope Valley. Efforts are underway to staff offices that have been historically understaffed. A minimum two year commitment for new workers is in place to address issues of staff turnover.
- In regards to lack of substance abuse treatment services for youth between the ages of 12 and 18, the Department of Public Health (DPH) has available funding to service these youth. However, it is hopeful that funding made available through health care reform will increase eligibility and services in this area.

Commissioner Curry added that a First 5LA grant to DPH provides substance abuse services for any member of a family that has a child age zero to five in the family household. Eligibility does not exclude undocumented citizens. Currently, there are available spots for these services.

By common consent and there being no objection, this item was received and filed.

### **III. PRESENTATIONS**

**6. Presentation on the implementation of Enhanced Transitional Planning (ETP) for Transitional Age Youth (TAY).**

- Andrew Bridge, Executive Director, Child Welfare Initiative
- Sarahbeth Winn, Child Welfare Initiative
- Lindsay Elliott, Children's Law Center
- Deborah Cromer, Esq., Alliance for Children's Rights
- Eclasia Wesley, Alliance for Children's Rights (14-0416)

**Mr. Bridge presented the following:**

- **Through a partnership between the Child Welfare Initiative (CWI), Children's Law Center, The Alliance for Children's Rights, Juvenile Court and DCFS, Court Lab was implemented in three courtrooms at Edelman Children's Court. Court Lab is now on its second year of implementation. The core aim of Court Lab is to improve transitional planning for children in the child welfare system 14 years of age and older.**
- **The initial phase of Court Lab was to gather evaluate and measure the gaps of historical practices of transition planning. This was done through having observers sit in children's court rooms to conduct a file review of the court report, observe the hearing, and interview the youth and caregiver, if present. This evaluation was conducted over a 15-month period and was likely the largest study done in regards to transition age youth and their outcomes. The three areas that were examined include; safety, well-being, and self-sufficiency.**

**Ms. Elliott presented the following:**

- **Nearly 700 file reviews were conducted, 430 judicial proceedings were observed, and 190 youth and 35 caregivers were interviewed.**

**Mr. Bridge reported the findings of the reviews as follows:**

- **51% of youth had a Transition to Independent Living Plan (TILP) in their file;**
- **60% of the court reports did not address the youth's need to have a stable permanent adult connection; and**
- **20% did not address the youth's progress or plan in graduating from high school.**

**Ms. Cromer reported the following:**

- **Court Lab's Partners met with Juvenile Court Presiding Judge Michael Nash and DCFS Director Browning to discuss their findings and made essential recommendations. The recommendations included: 1) increasing caregiver involvement in the development and implementation of transition plans; 2) improving the quality of information presented to the Juvenile Court in order for those involved in the process to have better information to help the youth, and 3) placing more emphasis on connecting the youth with permanent supportive adults.**

**Ms. Elliott explained the following:**

- **The cases that were examined were youth in out of home placement and between 14 to 21 years of age.**
- **As a result of the evaluations, Enhanced Transitional Planning (ETP) was developed to implement the recommendations. Two goals emerged from this development, one being to establish consistent judicial enforcement of the TILP and the other to get the youth more engaged and involved in the planning process. Some of the tools developed to help the court prioritize what is important for older youth include, a judicial checklist, and youth and caregiver forms.**
- **The Children's Law Center and The Alliance for Children's Rights have trained former foster care youth to work with Transitional Age Youth (TAY) as Peer Advocates in the court room. The Peer Advocates work with the youth on their transitional planning.**

**Ms. Wesley, a Peer Advocate provided some of her background as a former emancipated foster care youth and explained the following:**

- **Part of the role of a Peer Advocate is to encourage and coach youth to communicate with their judge on identified goals and what he or she needs to achieve these goals. Additionally, a resource packet titled, "Know Before You Go" is provided to the youth. The packet includes information on resources available to youth exiting the system.**

**Mr. Bridge reported the following:**

- **Currently there are six trained Peer Advocates, with two in each court room every day.**
- **Caregivers are able to provide valuable information in transitional planning that is unavailable to anyone else involved in the planning process. Caregiver involvement in the planning process improves case planning. Traditionally, foster parents have not been considered as a meaningful way to establish adult connections for the youth. Caregivers not present at the youth's hearing are contacted after the hearing to determine why they did not attend, and to find out what would make it easier for them to attend.**
- **Since the implementation of ETP in October of 2013 in Edelman Children's Court, the following has resulted:**
  - **The number of youth with a TILP in their case plan has risen from 51% to 99%.**
  - **The number of youth with a connected adult in their life has risen from 35% to 78%.**
  - **The number of youth with an education plan in their court report has risen from 57% to 87%**
- **A critical component of ETP teaches youth to be vocal and communicate their needs to judicial officers. This component prepares youth to self-advocate they exit out of the child welfare system.**

**In response to questions posed by the Commission, the presenters responded with the following:**

**Mr. Bridge explained:**

- **In terms of expanding Court Lab's ETP to additional courtrooms, training has been provided to judges. At this time, staffing is an issue.**

**Leslie Heimov, Children's Law Center, added that reaching successful transitional planning requires more than utilizing a manual and checklist. It requires the presence of a Peer Advocate located in the court room to move the process along. Using a Manual, without placing Peer Advocates in additional courtrooms, will not yield the same results as those achieved in the in the Edelman Court.**

- Funding for expansion of ETP may be obtained through private philanthropy to support the implementation; however, funding will not be provided on an ongoing basis.
- Approximately 25% of the files reviewed were for youth 14 years of age.
- In terms of having a model that utilizes ETP practices prior to reaching a courtroom, efforts are underway to implement ETP practices at the DCFS regional offices. However, the courtroom setting provides a value in that services can be ordered across boundaries.
- Ms. Cromer stated that crossover youth were included in the demographic evaluated; however, they were not targeted specifically.

By common consent and there being no objection, this item was received and filed.

Attachments:    [SUPPORTING DOCUMENT](#)

7. Presentation by SHARE! on self-help support groups for children, parents and caregivers.
  - Ruth Hollman, Executive Director (14-0417)

Ms. Hollman distributed a document titled, SHARE!'s Mission and presented the following:

- The mission of SHARE!, the Self Help and Recovery exchange, is to help people in Los Angeles pursue personal growth and change. SHARE! empowers people to change their lives and provides them a loving, safe, non-judgmental place where they can find community, information and support. SHARE! offers a variety of self-help support groups.
- SHARE! has been operating for 21 years and currently has two centers, one located in Culver City and the other in the skid row area of downtown Los Angeles. There are over 130 support groups meeting each week and over 3,000 visits to a center per month.

- **SHARE!'s concept is based on high tolerance and low demand and getting people to recognize that the responsibility for change in their lives is their own. Best practices are used in the self-help support groups. Research has shown that hospitalization rates are reduced by 50% with individuals just being aware that there is a self-help group available.**
- **SHARE! centers are placed on the edge of communities for the purpose of having a mixture of group participants from different socioeconomic backgrounds. The group setting often provides support systems through relationships and contacts made within the groups.**
- **SHARE!'s Rainbows support group is for children who have suffered any sort of trauma in their families. The program is free and available at several locations in Los Angeles. Studies done on Rainbows found that children who participate in this program have an increase in their self-esteem and are able to communicate better on what their needs and wants are. The minimal program cost of \$150 for facilitator training and should be funded through the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA).**
- **Alateen is for children who have experienced alcoholism, substance abuse, mental health issues, or any other types of dysfunctions in their families. The program is free. Alateen is a 12-step program that teaches youth strategies to deal with dysfunction in their families and how to establish safety boundaries. Research shows that youth who experienced alcoholism within their families and participated in Alateen had better outcomes with education and employment, in their young adulthood in comparison to those who did not attend Alateen. Alateen group meetings are located in different areas of Los Angeles and are well established in the faith based community.**
- **Because I Love You (BILY), is a program for parents who have children with behavioral issues. The program works with parents, offering support and guidance with parenting skills and teaches how to successfully work with professionals in this field. BILY was initiated in Los Angeles and has the potential for expansion.**
- **Recovering Couples Anonymous is a 12-step group for couples who would like to reunite; however, may have come from a dysfunctional family and do not have the tools to work towards mending a relationship. The group meetings are free.**



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- **Co Dependents Anonymous (CoDa)** is a program that can help parents who continually involve themselves in dysfunctional relationships, including situations where the boyfriend or girlfriend is abusive towards the child. The group's common purpose is to develop healthy relationships. The program is free.
  - **SHARE! Collaborative Housing** is another program that can assist emancipated youth with finding immediate housing. Residents live in a roommate situation. SHARE! has housed more people statewide since 2005 than the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) programs. Housing starts at \$350 per month. Currently, there are 240 houses participating in this program; however, additional houses can be opened specifically for TAY. Homeowner's are selected through a screening process with the majority of participating houses being located in middle class neighborhoods.

The following responses were provided to the Commission's questions:

- Director Browning indicated that he was not certain whether CSW's are aware of SHARE!'s programs and planned on investigating further.
- Ms. Hollman reiterated that all of the programs are very inexpensive. These programs were suggested at a Systems Leadership Team (SLT) for inclusion in the next MHSA Plan; however, discussions during the SLT meeting indicated that there is minimal MHSA funding available. Additionally, at a recent SLT meeting, the Peer Services Concept was presented; this concept was built into the 2005 MHSA Plan and was never implemented.
- In response to the Commission's comments on the need for a resource coordinator in DCFS offices, Director Browning responded that every DCFS office has a resource directory.

Ms. Hollman suggested that CSW's could leave an informational SHARE! flyer when visiting families.

- Ms. Hollman stated that there is lack of oversight at the State level in regards to MHSA funding. The decision-planning process in regards to the MHSA Plan needs improvement and change.

By common consent and there being no objection, this item was received and filed.

Attachments:    [SUPPORTING DOCUMENT](#)

8.     Update on the Commission's activities.

- Sylvia Drew Ivie, Commission Executive Liaison    (14-0423)

**By common consent there being no objection, this item was continued to the next meeting.**

**IV. MISCELLANEOUS**

**Matters Not Posted**

9.     Matters not posted on the agenda, to be discussed and (if requested) placed on the agenda for action at a future meeting of the Commission, or matters requiring immediate action because of an emergency situation or where the need to take action arose subsequent to the posting of the agenda.    (14-0424)

**There were none.**

**Announcements**

10.    Announcements for the meeting of January 27, 2014.    (14-0425)

**There were none.**

**Public Comment**

11.    Opportunity for members of the public to address the Commission on items of interest that are within the jurisdiction of the Commission.    (14-0426)

**No members of the public addressed the Commission**

**Adjournment**

12.    Adjournment of the meeting of January 27, 2014.    (14-0427)

**The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.**